



# Representative Erik Poulsen

## 1997 Session Report

June 1997

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your state representative!

The 1997 Legislature began its work at a fast pace in January and came to a dramatic conclusion in late April, when a strong spirit of bipartisanship enabled us to adjourn on time for the first time since 1958.

Democrats and Republicans worked together to craft a responsible state budget — one that falls about \$110 million below the spending limit established by Initiative 601. We also passed legislation that will help improve our public schools, make our streets safer, protect our natural resources, and provide a safety net for the less fortunate.

Still, I'm disappointed we weren't able to do more for the hardworking families in our district. The Legislature fell short in its efforts to provide meaningful property tax relief for homeowners; make health care insurance more accessible; reduce classroom sizes; expand job opportunities; and solve our region's transportation problems.

This newsletter summarizes some of the key issues we dealt with during the session. As always, I encourage you to contact me with your questions, opinions, and suggestions for how I can serve you better. Again, many thanks!

Sincerely,

  
REP. ERIK POULSEN  
State Representative

Olympia office:  
Representative Erik Poulsen  
243 John L. O'Brien Building  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

(360) 786-7938

E-mail:  
poulsen\_er@leg.wa.gov

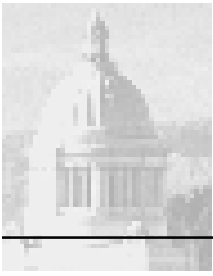
Toll-free Legislative Hotline:  
1-800-562-6000

TDD (for the hearing-impaired):  
1-800-635-9993

Committees:  
Appropriations  
Energy & Utilities,  
*ranking minority member*

### AT-A-GLANCE: How I voted on key issues.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes	Charter schools pilot program	(HB 2019)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no	College tuition increases	(SB5927)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no	Electrical industry deregulation	(SB6006)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no	Fingerprints on drivers' licenses	(HB 1208)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no	Growth management weakening	(HB 2244)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no	Health care reform rollback	(HB 2018)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes	Juvenile justice reform	(HB 3900)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes	Offshore drilling permanent ban	(HB 1189)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes	Regulatory reform	(HB 1076)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes	School levy lid extended	(HB 2069)
		Tax relief	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes	— B&O rollback	(HB 1821)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	yes	— Property tax cut	(SB 5835)



# Representative Erik Poulsen

## 1997 Session Report

---

### Budget compromise protects funding for kids, schools

For the first time since 1982, Republicans held the majority in both the state House and Senate, steering the course of all policy and budget decisions. The budget they presented to the governor was disappointing because of their cuts to public schools and several cost-effective programs that help children and families.

As a member of the budget-writing Appropriations Committee, I offered several amendments — most of them education-related — which helped make the final outcome more palatable.

Negotiations between the governor and Legislature resulted in a compromise budget totaling \$19.07 billion for the next two years. It falls about \$110 million below the spending limit established by Initiative 601.

### Here are a few highlights:

**Education:** The final budget protects funding for education reform, school safety, technology in the classroom, and programs for kids who can't yet speak English — all of which were in jeopardy. School employees, who've had only one cost-of-living increase in the last four years, received a 3 percent raise.

**Basic Health Plan (BHP):** The budget provides 11,500 new openings for subsidized, low-cost health insurance managed by the state. Unfortunately, over 55,000 people remain on the waiting list. I'll continue to make funding for BHP one of my top legislative priorities.

**Welfare reform:** Job training, child care, and health care are funded at minimal levels. Legal immigrants are eligible for benefits. Strict work requirements and a five-year lifetime limit are established. Drivers and professional licenses may be suspended for nonpayment of child support.

**Child protection:** The caseload for Child Protective Services (CPS) workers is reduced from 32 to 29 cases per worker. A new "Passport Program" is funded which will protect foster children by providing a concise record of their current medical, dental, psychological and education status.

### Poulsen budget amendment scores victory for hungry children

The original House budget cut funding for a vital program that provides lunch for poor kids who attend summer programs at schools and community centers. Yet, ironically, at the same time the budget created a new million-dollar program to feed deer and elk!

My amendment to save the summer food program was the only Democratic amendment adopted during the budget debate on the floor in either the House or Senate.

### Energy deregulation: We'll study and wait

This session, several major industrial interests pushed for rapid deregulation of our state's electrical energy industry. As lead Democrat on the House Energy and Utilities Committee, I worked to slow the pace of power deregulation because it could hurt residential consumers, our environment, and the reliability of our power system.

We in Washington state enjoy the nation's cheapest, cleanest power. While deregulation may have

reduced costs in other industries, there's nowhere for our rates to go but up. That's why I sponsored HB 2232, which would have called for a comprehensive study of what deregulation could mean to us. Although the bill was killed in committee, the chair of the committee has agreed that we will study the issue during the interim. I'll be at the table to make sure our interests are protected.

## Protecting the environment — for now and the future

Democrats spent the session fighting to protect the state's environment from special-interest and bad legislation. I would have preferred to spend our time finding solutions to pressing problems such as pollution, growth and dwindling salmon stocks, which will likely bring federal intervention if they are declared an endangered species.

Offshore drilling ban: After a few years of debate over this issue, we finally passed a permanent ban on oil and gas exploration and drilling off Washington's coasts. I'm proud to have sponsored this legislation which Governor Locke signed into law on April 23. It imposes a permanent ban on oil and gas exploration and drilling off Washington's coast. We can't afford the risk of major spills on our coastline.

Protecting shorelines: I vigorously opposed HB 2198, which would have ended state protection of our shorelines and undermined the voter-approved Shoreline Protection Act. The Seattle PI characterized this bill as *"another naked attempt to undermine the public interest in the name of private gain."* The bill passed the House despite every single Democrat and one Republican voting against it. Fortunately, it died in the Senate.

The Columbia River Gorge: The budget written by the majority party gutted the power of the Columbia River Gorge Commission by decimating its budget so it can't operate effectively. If the Commission is unable to do its work, we face federal intervention and control over this important area.

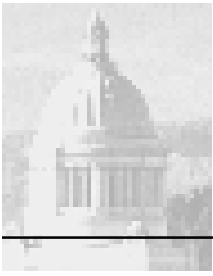
Hazardous substances: You'd think there would be unanimous agreement on using alternatives to hazardous products, but that wasn't the case this year. HB 1601, which I opposed, would have banned government from giving information to people about alternatives to toxic products, such as letting them know that you can use beer to kill slugs instead of store-bought, toxic slug bait. This bill died in the Senate.



Educating tomorrow's leaders is important to me. That's why each year I sponsor students to serve as Legislative Pages in order to gain first-hand knowledge about state government.

## Fighting for meaningful property-tax relief

The Legislature passed an across-the-board 4.7 percent cut in the state property-tax, which provides businesses and homeowners about \$18 in relief on every \$100,000 of assessed valuation. I sponsored plan that would have given homeowners a \$205 per year tax credit, but the bill was killed in committee.



# Representative Erik Poulsen 1997 Session Report

---

## Improving Vashon Ferry service

The Transportation Budget includes money for additional weekend service for the Fauntleroy-Vashon-Southworth ferry to lessen the overloads on Saturdays and Sundays off the North End dock. The budget that passed includes no new gas taxes, so the added service represents a victory for our district.

## Funding the Log House Museum

West Seattle, as the birthplace of Seattle, played an important role in Northwest history. The Southwest Seattle Historical Society has worked very hard to preserve our heritage through the Seattle Log House Museum. Thanks in large part to their efforts, this year's capital budget provides over \$190,000 for this important landmark.

BULK RATE  
U. S. POSTAGE PAID  
Washington State  
Department of Printing

1997  
Session Report

Representative  
Erik Poulsen  
243 John L. O'Brien Building  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600